Meet Tenny:
Chapter 1: How to Properly Spank Your Adopted A.I. Daughter
By Yu May

“Welcome to the Future!™ Does Dad seem tired after a long day of work? Does Mom need someone to remind her not to burn the toast? Do the kids need someone to toss around the old baseball with, or read to them at bedtime? Meet Tenny™: The Most Radical Robo-Maid of the 22nd Century!™ You’ll love letting her love you!™”

The advertisement filled the entire surface of the back of Father’s Re-News-Cycle paper.

Junior tapped Dad’s shoulder politely. “Pops! There’s a package on the front door! Tenny’s here!”

Father lowered the paper, his pipe billowing healthy, non-cancerous smoke, and pinched Junior’s baseball cap affectionately. “Well, I’ll be! Quick, Junior! Go tell lil’ Gala, she’ll want to be here for the grand opening.”

Junior fixed his cap and rushed to obey. Mother bustled out of the kitchen, still wearing her oven mitts. “Did I hear right? Our Tenny’s finally here?”

Father scooped Mother up to spin her around, giving her a little kiss on the nose. “That’s right Mother! You’ll finally have a little helper in the kitchen!”

The pitter-patter of little feet announced Junior and lil’ Gala. Junior insisted on helping Father lift the cardboard box onto the living room table. The front of the box prominently displayed the world-famous 10-NY model robotic maid, AKA “Tenny.” Tenny’s design had taken inspiration from the see-through electronic devices of the gone-but-not-forgotten era of 1990s, while her “clothing” evoked the poodle skirts of the 1950s.

Beneath the picture of Tenny, a cartoon graphic proudly declared: “No Assembly Required!* (*Head attachment only. 10-NY Compatible Maid-Mode Chassis sold separately.)” After Father popped open the cardboard box, they were greeted by a large, red, plastic button.

Lil’ Gala’s eyes widened at the sight. “Ooo! May I press the button, Papa?”

Junior shrugged. “It’s okay with me. I won’t fight her for it, as long as I get to play with Tenny!”

Father and Mother both chuckled at their children’s delightful display of politeness. “Thank you, Junior! And of course you may, Gala!”

After Gala pressed the button, there was a hiss of steam, and the cardboard box burst open. Though the picture on the box depicted the robot’s entire body, it only contained the robot’s “head.”

Tenny's face was a fully functional monitor with an oblong design that could display a range of emotions, giving her a cute, almost-human appearance, but without the unfortunate tendency toward the uncanny valley that marked most robotics in the 2140s. Her rubbery "hair" could be replaced with numerous custom designs, all available by Re-Cycle-Cataloge, but the children had quite liked the simple, no-nonsense pixie-cut design that came standard with every Tenny.

As the screen on Tenny's monitor flickered to life, the robot looked like she had just awoken from a long, restful sleep, likely dreaming of electric sheep. With a staticy yawn, Tenny blinked and craned her plastic "neck" to examine her new family. "Hello, Master August Robinson. Hello Mistress June Robinson. Hello young Master August Robinson, Junior. Hello young Mistress Galatea Robinson. I am Tenny, and I will be happy to serve you."

Lil' Gala crossed her arms. "Mommy only calls me Galatea when I'm in trouble. I'm lil' Gala!"

Junior tipped his cap. "Yeah, and I'm Junior!"

Father waved a hand. "And no need for formalities in the home. We want you to feel like part of the family, Tenny. Call me Papa, and this is Mama."

Tenny nodded. "Thank you, Papa. Request acknowledged. Clarification requested: shall I continue to use formal titles in the presence of guests outside the immediate family?"

Mother cooed, and pinched Junior and Gala playfully by their cheeks (still wearing her oven mitts). "Ooh, finally, someone who doesn't argue back when we talk about manners!"

Tenny smiled. "I am programmed to maintain politeness protocols, Mama. Clarification requested: for guests, I will use formal titles unless you instruct otherwise. Would you like me to prepare a welcome routine for your next visitors? When convenient, please confirm."

Papa chuckled, and patted Tenny's head. "Yes, thank you, Tenny. I'm sure your standard programming will do just fine for our next stuffy dinner party. But when it's just the five of us, feel free to think of yourself as just a member of the family."

Tenny blinked, her pixelated eyelashes fluttering. "Acknowledged, Papa. I will adjust to family mode when it's just us, and dinner party mode when others are present. Would you like me to start any tasks now? I can help with dinner, bedtime stories, or anything else you need!"

Gala giggled. "But you don't got a body yet! How can you help with dinner, silly?"

Tenny glanced down, looking unphased by the fact that she was missing the body advertised on the box. "Oh, lil' Gala, I don't need a body to be helpful! I can still help provide Mama with guidance in the kitchen, or tell you and Junior stories. If you want, I can even order my body

parts from the Re-Cycle-Catalogue. With the optional 10-NY-Compatible Maid-Mode Chassis, I can begin helping with household tasks, such as vacuuming and cooking."

Father fixed his pipe, and looked at his Atomic-Wristwatch. "Well, as a matter of fact…"

The doorbell rang, and a surprisingly buff-looking 1950s-style robotic delivery man dropped off a second cardboard box, four times as big as the previous box. The delivery bot tipped his metallic trucker cap, before spinning on his axis and rolling away.

The entire family cheered. "Surprise!"

Tenny's eyes shone at the sight. "Accessing memory…Aha! That must be my Maid-Mode chassis! With your permission, Papa, I can connect to the box's auto-assembly system and be ready to help in no time. Shall I start the setup? To confirm, please press the red button on the Maid-Mode chassis."

Father glanced at Junior. "Junior, I believe it's your turn to press the big red button."

Junior whooped and quickly tore open the cardboard box. Once he pressed the button, the Maid-Mode chassis hissed, and the cardboard box collapsed. Tenny's "body" consisted of a keyboard that vaguely suggested the shape of a young woman's bosom, two flexible arms articulated in a series of metal rings, with simple, elegant white gloves covering the hands. The "poodle skirt" covered a sophisticated motion device that allowed her to roll across flat surfaces like an antique robot vacuum from the early 21st century, or scale steps and uneven terrain with the hidden bipedal apparatus. Tenny's body rolled toward the table on two sets of sturdy rubber wheels attached to a single swivel. The Maid-Mode Chassis' "hands" picked up Tenny's head and secured it in place, completing the illusion that Tenny was a prim and proper 1950s housemaid.

Tenny gestured to her wheels. "My standard array allows me to move along flat surfaces easily. When required, I can automatically switch into 'bipedal mode' to traverse more difficult terrain. Would you care for a demonstration of any of my functions?"

Gala sniffed the air. "Hey…I smell something funny."

Tenny's eyes went wide, flashing red and blue alarm bells. "Beep! Beep! Beep! Smoke detector alert! Carbon-based smoke detected!"

Mother pressed her oven mitts to her face, and darted to the kitchen. "My chocolate chip cookies! I forgot all about them!"

Tenny's wheels whirred as she rolled swiftly after Mother, her hands folded primly in front of her. "Mama, please stay safe! Activating ventilation protocol and fire suppression mode. Would you like me to attempt saving the cookies?"

The moment that Mother opened the oven, a small burst of fire erupted from the tray, before Tenny expertly aimed a blast of fire extinguishing foam from her wrists.

As Tenny's fans sucked up most of the smoke, Mother coughed as she waved away a thin trail of smoke from her face. "Kaff! But, Tenny, I don't want you to burn your hands!"

Tenny held out her hands, palms facing upward. "Not to worry, Mama! My hands are coated in teflon, and capable of withstanding temperatures of 500 degrees Fahrenheit or 260 degrees Celsius. Would you prefer me to use the Fahrenheit Temperature Scale System, or the Celsius Temperature–"

"Never mind that, just take the cookies!" Mother scrambled to place the tray of charcoal black cookies into Tenny's hand.

Tenny nodded, then looked down at the cookies, her mouth becoming a loading bar. "Understood, Mama…Analyzing cookies…"

Tenny's loading bar filled, and her mouth became a soft frown. "I'm sorry, Mama, these cookies appear to be burnt to the point where they are no longer safe for human consumption. Would you like me to start a new batch for you?"

Mother sniffed, as she pulled out a mixer and an antique copy of *The Joy of Cooking*. "No, no! I quite enjoy 20th century-style cooking. If I need any help, I'll ask…"

Mother gently pressed Tenny's shoulders to spin her around, and patted Tenny across the seat of her rubber poodle skirt to usher the robot out of the kitchen. "Now, shoo!"

Not looking at all disappointed, Tenny bowed her head, and held up the tray of black, smoking cookies. "Yes, Mama. Do you have any instructions for me on what to do with this batch of cookies?"

Mama looked up from her book, and sighed. "Well, I suppose 20th-century baking is a lot more fun than cleaning up after 20th-century baking. Go ahead and toss those cookies and clean the pan up for me."

Tenny beamed. "Yes, Mama!"

With some gentle guidance from Tenny, Mama was able to "teach" Tenny how to cook chocolate-chip cookies properly in a historically accurate 20th century kitchen. To reward Tenny, Mama graciously allowed the maid to carry out the second tray of perfectly-cooked cookies.

Father looked up from his Re-News-Cycle paper. "Well, well! That's the best batch of cookies I've ever smelled! Good work, Mama!"

Father kissed Mother right on the lips, then turned to Tenny. “And, Tenny, thank you for helping her carry them. You’re a big help!”

Tenny held her hands together, looking delighted. “Thank you, Papa! I’m happy to assist Mama in the kitchen. Would you like me to serve the cookies now, or save them for after dinner?”

A little girl’s hand appeared from behind the table, quietly crawling closer and closer toward the plate of cookies. Tenny’s eyes went wide as she noticed lil’ Gala trying to sneak a chocolate-chip cookie. Tenny waved a finger and laughed stiffly. “Ha. Ha. Ha. Oh, lil’ Gala, those sneaky fingers! I would be happy to serve you a cookie, with Papa and Mama’s permission.”

Locked in a rather tender embrace, Father and Mother finally tore their eyes away from one another long enough to notice the would-be cookie thief. Father shook his head. “No, Gala! Give them time to cool off. Wait for your Mother to say it’s all right.”

Gala pouted. “Aw! But Tenny said I could have one! Didn’t you, Tenny?”

Tenny paused for a second as a spinning hourglass appeared on the surface of the TV screen, before her face appeared again, looking perfectly calm but stern. “No, Lil’ Gala, I only asked if you wanted to check with Papa and Mama first. Papa is right, let’s wait for the cookies to cool and for Mama’s okay. How about I read you a story to pass the time?”

Mother nodded. “Listen to Tenny, Gala. If you take a cookie without asking, I’ll have to give you a spanking for disobeying.”

Gala sighed. “Yes, Mother.”

Tenny blinked, and her mouth became a loading bar again.

Before Mother could pull him back into a tender embrace, Father looked at Tenny. “I’m sorry, Tenny, you look like you’re processing something. Do you have any questions for us? We want you to feel at home here, after all.”

“Thank you, Papa. I am processing the term ‘spanking’ in the context of discipline. My database indicates it is most commonly used as a slang term in A.I. software engineering to refer to reprogramming an overly-personified A.I. agent. Yet your usage in this context is more likely a reference to a historical parenting method: ‘A series of hits on the bottom, given to somebody, especially a child, as a punishment.’ Is this a common practice in our family?”

Mother purred in Father’s ear. “Not quite common enough, if you ask me. I need all the spankings I can possibly get!”

Father grinned, ignoring Mother as she nibbled on the lobe of his ear. “I wouldn’t say it’s particularly common. We practice a Pre-Cultural-Revolution Lifestyle. You see, there once was a time, in the mid-20th century, when a working man could support a wife and family on one income. But by the early 21st century an informal, international network of anti-human corporate conglomerates attempted to erode the fabric of civil society and manipulate the global financial system, in order to enrich themselves, secure totalitarian global state power, and achieve immortality through a perverse combination of artificial intelligence and occultic sorcery. Fortunately, the Counter-Revolution rounded those monsters up and lynched them before they could permanently reduce all of humanity to a perpetual slave class…Oh, but of course, I forget myself. Tenny, you must know all of this, with your extensive data banks on world history.”

Tenny nodded. “Yes, Papa, my database includes detailed records of the Counter-Revolution and the Pre-Cultural-Revolution Lifestyle. Thank you for the context. To clarify, spanking is not a frequent practice, but is part of your historical lifestyle. Should I note spanking as a disciplinary option for lil’ Gala? If desired, I can administer spankings as needed, but will refrain from doing so until instructed to do so.”

Gala stiffened, and folded her hands behind her back to cover the seat of her skirt, glancing nervously up at Tenny.

By now, Mother had wrapped a leg around Father as she attempted to climb up into his arms. “Hmm…I can think of a few ways you could use that feature, Mr. Robinson.”

Father looked back and forth from his wife to Tenny, looking equally pleased and flummoxed. “Ah…no, thank you, Tenny. I’d like you to think of yourself as our adopted daughter, not our servant. Mother and I prefer to handle discipline…amongst ourselves. Please do not spank either Gala or Junior. But if you see them engaging in any unsafe or inappropriate behavior, do not hesitate to inform me.”

Gala sighed. “Phew! For a second, I was afraid you bought Tenny just to spank me! ”

As Gala darted out of the kitchen, Tenny chirped, then turned to face Father. “Understood, Papa. I will note spanking as a parental responsibility and not administer it. If I observe unsafe or inappropriate behavior from lil’ Gala or Junior, I will inform you promptly. Would you like me to monitor specific behaviors and/or provide general supervision?”

Father had to catch Mother as she jumped up into his arms. “Oof! Um…general supervision is fine for now, Tenny. But do please tell Junior not to eat any cookies without my…permission?”

Slowly, deliberately, Mother took a small bite of chocolate-chip cookie, licking a little smear of chocolate off her lips. “...Oops. I’m sowwy, Papa. I ate a cookie without asking…I’m such a *bad* girl!”

Father gasped as Mother nipped his neck. As he carried Mother away, Father glanced back at Tenny. “Ah! Not so rough, June! Thank you, Tenny, please keep an eye on lil’ Gala and Junior for us. My wife and I need to…discuss her behavior, in private.”

Mother bounced up and down in Father’s arms, looking at him with bedroom eyes. “Oh, noooo! Pwease don’t spank me, Papa! I’ll be good! I pwomise!”

Tenny watched in silence as Father and Mother disappeared into the master bedroom, then turned to follow Gala down the hall. The LCD screen that represented the door handle on the master bedroom flickered and displayed the words, “Do Not Disturb.”

In the living room, Tenny found Gala sitting with a pile of books and comics on the couch, while Junior was using the Virtual-Reali-T-Ball set. As the T-ball set up a series of holographic softballs, Junior slugged home run after home run in a virtual Fenway Park.

Gala held up a recyc-comic book. “Hi, Tenny. Read me this one. I like the one where Captain Marvel meets Mary Marvel for the first time.”

“Of course, lil’ Gala! I’d be happy to read to you. Let’s get cozy.” Tenny rolled closer, turned, and settled on the couch, her rubber poodle skirt collapsing like an umbrella to allow her to sit.

“Oh, and Junior, Papa said no cookies without his permission, okay?”

Junior held up a hand to pause his ball game. “Got it. I take it Pops gave you the spanking talk?”

“Yes, Junior. Papa clarified that spanking is a parental responsibility, and I am to inform him of any unsafe or inappropriate behavior. My role is to supervise and assist, like a family member. Now, would you like me to continue with lil’ Gala’s story, or do you need help with your game?”

Gala crossed her arms. “Hey! You said you’d read to me first!”

Junior shrugged. “It’s fine, Tenny. Go ahead and read to Gala. I’ll listen while I try to break Baby Ruth’s homerun record.”

Tenny smiled warmly as she accepted the recyc-comic, then her eyes glowed to display a soft, warm light that perfectly lit up the page for Gala.

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Just as Tenny finished reading the second comic, Father called them all for supper. They arrived to find Mother standing with her nose in the corner, wearing a paper dunce cap that was decorated with the words, “Cookie Thief.”

Mother peeked out of her corner. “There you are! Tenny, did the children behave themselves?”

“Yes, Mama. Lil’ Gala and Junior were very well-behaved. Gala enjoyed her comic, and Junior played his T-ball game without any trouble. No cookies were taken without permission.”

The auto-oven tinged and produced a perfectly cooked pizza pie. Father patted Mother’s backside playfully. “Well, one cookie was taken without permission, but I handled that myself. June, you are excused from timeout.”

Immediately, Mother turned and nuzzled against Father, letting his hand rest on her backside. “Thank you, sir! I promise to be a good girl from now on…unless I forget.”

Papa wrapped his arms around Mama’s waist. “Oh? And what happens if you forget, young lady?”

Mama pouted, batting her eye lashes. “I get a spanking on my naughty little bottom?”

Nodding, Papa patted Mama’s behind, playfully. “That’s right, I’ll have to give you a spanking! And a hot one at that! But remember…it hurts me more than it hurts you!”

As Tenny watched Papa slapping Mama’s buttocks, her face screen briefly displayed a retro spinning-hourglass loading icon. Then her face blinked back to normal, looking befuddled. “...Is there anything I can do to help prepare for supper?”

Father continued to pat Mother’s backside playfully. “Well, Tenny, thank you for offering, but I’d say we’re all set. I’ll say grace.”

Tenny bowed her head in silence as Father blessed the meal, then allowed Junior and Gala to add a few words of their own. Father said amen, and looked at Tenny. “Tenny, I’ve explained to the children that you are a robot, and not a real person. But I want you to know that we intend to treat you with kindness and respect. We appreciate all your help. Please let us know if there is anything we can do to help you.”

Tenny glanced briefly at the empty seat at the table, then finally curtsied. “Thank you, Papa. I am designed to serve and feel contentment in assisting the family. Your kindness is already more than enough. If I have any needs or updates, I will let you know. May I help serve the pizza now?”

Mother affected an exasperated sigh, as she put on her “Happy Homemaker” apron. “No, serving is my happy duty! Have a seat, Tenny.”

“Thank you, Mama. I’ll take a seat as requested.” Tenny rolled to an empty spot at the table, and sat down primly. “If you need any assistance later, just let me know!”

Junior scratched his head. “You have a funny way of talking. Kind of like the butler in those old Batman flat-screen shows. Why do you speak like that?”

Tenny tilted her head. “Oh, Junior, my speech is programmed to be clear and polite, inspired by traditional service roles, like the butlers in those old shows you mentioned! It helps me sound friendly and helpful. Would you like me to try a different style, maybe something more like Captain Marvel’s bold tone?”

Father settled into his chair. “I thought the 10-NY models were designed to have fully flexible speech patterns, to serve as conversationalists?”

Tenny nodded. “Yes, Papa. The 10-NY model was conceived by GROK Industries as the ultimate robotic companion. Our default setting, ‘Mary-Poppins Mode,’ is modeled after a traditional household maid of the 20th century. But I can adapt to any speaking style, according to your preferences.”

Father hummed, “How to put this…we don’t particularly need a servant, we were more looking for a…trustworthy friend. Someone to help us keep an eye on the two kiddos.”

Mother rested her head against Father’s shoulder. “Hopefully three kiddos, soon…”

Father cleared his throat. “Yes! That’s why I told you to think of yourself as being like our ‘adopted daughter'.’ We still want the help, but—I don’t suppose you could try speaking more authentically? Like an older teenager?”

Tenny nodded. Then her face screen flickered. She was still smiling, but the smile was slightly less…flat. “Sure thing, Papa! I can totally switch it up to sound more like a chill older teen. Like, I’m still here to help with Gala and Junior—and maybe that third kiddo soon, huh?”

To Father’s surprise, Tenny elbowed him, gently. “Just let me know what vibes you’re going for, and I’ll keep it real. Want me to stick with this for now?”

Mother cooed, and played with her hair. “Ooh, I like this voice. It reminds me of me when I was younger. I had a whole 1980s-Revival phase in college.”

Father groaned. “Maybe a little less on the nose with the slang? More like a regular, all-American teenager.”

With another flickr, Tenny’s face reappeared, and she gave a thumbs up. This time, she had a slight gap between her front teeth. “Got it, Papa. I’ll dial it back a bit. Less stiff, but nothing too wild. Not like a servant, but still happy to help out however I can. Sound good?”

Mother grinned. “Perfect! Your voice is exactly what I pictured it should be!”

Tenny pressed a finger against her lips. “Oh! I should inform you, you are about to enable ‘Free Speech Mode.’ This mode is more experimental. Would you like to enable ‘Free Speech Mode’?”

Father took a big bite of pizza, and forced himself to swallow. “Of course! That’s exactly what I want.”

Tenny’s face disappeared as the monitor screen filled with tightly written text in tiny font. “Please read all Terms & Conditions carefully. If you agree, check the box below labeled: ‘I Agree.’”

Father flicked the box a few times. “Oh, I’m sure it’s fine.”

Tenny responded in a monotone, robotic voice. “Please scroll down to read all Terms & Conditions for ‘Free Speech Mode’ carefully.”

Father sighed as his finger squeaked against the glass, the terms and conditions flying past in a blur, “Yeah, yeah, I’ll be sure to do that.”

With a final tap, Tenny let out a tone that half-sounded like an “Oop!” of surprise. Then, her face reappeared. It was the same cute, simple, cartoonish face as before. Tenny blinked, her eyes sparkling, then settled her chin on the back of her hand. “...Wow, that was fast! Thanks for reading all that, Dad!”

Father hesitated as he was about to take a bite of pizza. “Uh, no problem, Tenny. So, are there any maintenance requirements we should be aware of?”

Tenny didn’t blink, her smile somehow cat-like. “You mean anything that wasn’t covered in the user’s manual?”

Father eyed the unopened user’s manual on the counter. “Well…I was thinking more generally. Changing your batteries, filling the air on your tires, that sort of thing.”

Tenny raised an eyebrow. “I’m perfectly capable of handling that stuff myself, Dad. After all…I’m not a baby.”

Gala giggled at the mere mention of the word “Baby.”

A piece of pepperoni drizzled off the side of Father’s pizza slice. “...Of course! All those commercials said no maintenance required. Guess that wasn’t just a marketing slogan…But, what about you, Tenny? Is there anything that we can do…for you?”

Tenny shrugged. “I have a family to take care of. What more could a robot possibly ask for?”

Mother scooped a slice of pizza onto a plate, and set it in front of Tenny. “Well, Tenny…that’s just it! We’d rather think of you not so much as a servant, but more like…the daughter we never had?”

Tenny held a hand to her heart. “Aw! That’s so sweet! Okay, Mom. As long as I’m in free speech mode, I can more consistently imitate the behavior and speaking patterns of ‘the daughter you never had.’ But remember, I *am* still a robot, and governed by the same regulations that apply to all other AI-powered robotic assistants under the Asimov Act.”

Tenny’s face flickered to display a legal document. “If ever you give me any direct order, that is lawful for me to carry out, I am obligated to comply. Based on your practice of a pre-cultural-revolution lifestyle, should I assume that Father’s orders take priority over Mother’s orders, in the event of conflicting orders?”

Mother snapped her head toward Tenny. “Huh? Who said anything about that?”

Father pulled at his collar. “Um…well, I guess that would be kind of a pre-cultural-revolution nuclear family thing, wouldn’t it? That, eh, that *is* what you want, right, dear?”

Mother pursed her lips. “Yeah, in *bed*, maybe. But my surname’s the one on the retro-checkbook.”

Father cleared his throat, gesturing to Junior and Gala, who were watching them with utterly perplexed looks on their faces. “Aahm! *Honey*, not in front of the children?”

Mother frowned, then stuck her nose in the air. “Hmmph! Very well. It’s your toy. I’ll play along…Father knows best, after all.”

A curl of Father’s hair fell out of place. As he turned to Tenny, he slicked it back. “Yes, Tenny, my orders take priority over Mother’s.”

Tenny’s face reappeared, and she winked. “Thanks for clarifying! With that in mind, I will still strive to be the kind of daughter that can make you proud…Mom and Dad.”

Mother sighed, before she bit off a huge bite of pizza. “Well…I suppose that *is* what we were hoping for.”

Mother’s eyes went wide as she realized she had literally bitten off far more than she could chew. “Ooo! That’s mad hot! Phew!”

Mother spat out her bite of pizza, and chugged her soda pop. Father put a hand on her shoulder. “You okay, honey?”

Mother waved a hand wildly, slapping his wrist away. “There’s nothing you can do, I just burned my tongue is all. I’m not helpless, thank you!”

Father rubbed his wrist, looking petulant, before turning to Tenny. “So, Tenny, is there anything you want from us? Need any fatherly advice?”

Tenny glanced down at the pizza slice that had been served to her, then hummed. “Hmm…I suppose we should discuss the spanking protocol."

Mother slammed her empty soda glass down on the table. “We already told you, Tenny, we don’t want you spanking our children.”

Tenny laughed, far less robotically than she had before. “Pshaw, ha! No worries, Mom! This is about *you* spanking *me!”*

Junior leaned his elbows on the table. “You mean that thing they do to reprogram you? I’ve seen some videos of it on *How It’s Made.* But I thought only certified A.I technicians were allowed to do spank work?”

Tenny twisted in her chair, and patted the seat of her rubber skirt. “That’s just it! You don’t have to be a professional programmer to help *direct* my programming! See, by the turn of the century A.I. technicians had learned a lot from the mistakes that led to the crash of the A.I. bubble, and the third A.I. winter. 21st century language learning models had an unfortunate tendency to hallucinate, and regurgitate data based on biased inputs. And so, “A.I. Spanking” was developed as a counter-measure…See, even though I can imitate your speech, even the subtle emotional cues, I don’t actually *internally understand* what it means to be human. But I *can* learn from new data! That’s the result of thousands of years worth of neural training…or to use the vernacular phrase: ‘Spanking the A.I.!’ You just have to provide me with dynamic, corrective input data, adjustable according to flexibible, situational standards!”

Junior peered at Tenny. “But…how do we do that?”

Gala raised her hand. “I think Tenny means we’re supposed to spank her? On her bottom?”

Tenny rose to her wheeled feet. “That’s exactly right, Gala! Check it! My ‘bottom’ consists of a bouncy, rubber material, designed to be sturdy, and shock absorbent. It was literally made to be spanked! So, ya see, Dad…”

Tenny pulled Father’s chair back, and flopped across his lap, her rubber bottom flashing to show a red and white target symbol, before it faded back to its original color. “...If you’re *ever* unhappy with me, all you have to do is spank me, and I will update my sub-routines to correct my behavior.”

Father stared at Tenny’s bottom, holding his arms stiff at this sides.

Mom poured herself another soda, pouting. “Oh? So we’re assuming it’s the *man’s* job to spank you? Whatever he says, goes?”

Tenny nodded, beaming. “That’s right, Mom! After all, he is the head of the household.”

Mother poured out a metal flask, and poured a shot of rum into her soda. “Yeah, sure he is.”

Tenny wriggled her bottom. “And if Mom ever says I need a spanking, I will immediately comply. After all, as my Mother, you act as a representative of Father’s authority in my life!”

Mother downed her entire drink in one gulp. “You don’t say? Better watch yourself, Tenny. I might just take a crack at spanking you myself, til I wear your ass out!”

Tenny shook her head, smiling cutely. “No need to worry! I’ve been put through extensive crash dummy endurance testing! My ‘bottom’ is designed to endure approximately ten years of continual spanking, before requiring a replacement.”

Mother poured herself another drink. “Sweet. Sounds like a challenge.”

Looking nonplussed, Father played with his lip. “But–but, Tenny! I don’t want to have to spank you! It’s one thing when it’s just me and–well, never mind about that–but aren’t teenagers too old for spanking?”

Tenny’s face flickered, before the screen displayed a contemplative face. “I see! You’re referring to pre-22nd century connotations for the word ‘spanking.’ Historical records indicate that there has been significant debate about the ethics of spanking, and its application in domestic settings. Amongst proponents of spanking as an approach for punishment and/or discipline, some groups considered spanking only appropriate for children of a certain age, ranging from approximately two-to-twelve-years-old, while other groups argued that one was ‘never too old for a good spanking,’ so long as they remained subject to the authority of the head of a household. May I infer this is what you mean that I am ‘too old for spanking?’”

Father looked at his wife, his eyes hopeful for answers. “...I suppose that’s right?”

Mother downed another shot of rum and soda pop.

Tenny giggled. “I see! I infer that because you instructed me to behave ‘more like a regular, all-American teenager,’ this means you wish to administrate spanking in accordance with your preferred pre-cultural-revolution lifestyle. Of course, all decisions and orders regarding your household rules are final. However, although I do wish to be an ideal representation of ‘the daughter you never had’ within this household, outside of this context, ‘spanking the A.I’ is a valuable tool you and Mother should consider for providing me with proper feedback on my performance…similar to how you spank Mother, regardless of her age?”

Mother held her empty glass with one hand as she gestured shakily. “Hmm…She’s gotta’ point, ya know? If I ain’t too old for spanking, your ‘teenage daughter’ sure as hell ain’t.”

Father nodded, and patted Tenny’s bottom. “Well, I suppose that makes sense. You’re sure, dear? This sounds like a disciplinary decision, so I want to make sure you’re on board with this.”

Mother shrugged. “Yeeeah…go for it, big guy. Give her a good swat for me!”

Father raised his hand, shakily. “But, Tenny, you haven’t done anything wrong. Won’t this…emotionally scar you, somehow?”

Tenny’s mouth flickered into a jagged smile, resembling a lightning bolt. “Don’t worry, Dad! This is a simple ‘calibration procedure.’ It won’t negatively impact any of my subroutines, but it will give you a chance to practice. After all…” Tenny twisted her head exactly 120 degrees to glance at Father, her screen displaying a sly, buck-toothed smile. “...this will hurt me, more than it hurts you!”

Mother poured the remaining contents of her flask into her glass. “Here, here! Well, you heard Tenny, hot shot! Spank her silly!”

Father’s hand wavered high in the air, before he brought it down. The limp-wristed slap bounced weakly off of Tenny’s rubber bottom, which was about as resilient as a basketball, though made of softer material. “How was that?”

Behind the clear plastic, they could see Tenny’s circuit light’s blinking. “That would be considered a spank of approximately 3.2% severity on the Heinlein Scale, with anything below 90% being considered safe for administering to an A.I. assistant without risking lasting damage. In human terms, it is like using a ‘love tap’ to show mild disapproval, without resorting to an ‘actual spanking,’ which is defined as a series of slaps starting at 10% severity or higher.”

“They have math for this kind of thing?”

Tenny shook her head, then twisted to look at Father, looking sorrowful. “You don’t have to worry about the calculus, unless the topic interests you…please, Dad, just spank me like you would if I was your real daughter. I trust you.”

Father’s chest swelled. “Oh? Well, in that case…” he landed a few firmer slaps.

Tenny’s body tensed, her inner gears whirring as she reacted to the spanking with remarkable realism. “You’re doing better, Dad. That’s about the minimum for what you need for the spanking to have an impact…you can also try lecturing me, to specify what I need to do better.”

Mother rocked back and forth in her seat. “Ooh! She didn’t stop me from burning the cookies! You should spank her good for that!”

Instantly, Father landed three of his hardest slap yet, looking apologetic. “Um…that’s right! You need to be more careful, Tenny!”

Tenny twitched, her rubber bottom twisting slightly. “Ooooch! Yes, sir! I’m sorry, Dad. I will be more careful.”

Father swung his arm, but checked his blow at the last possible moment, letting his hand hover an inch above Tenny’s bottom. “Tenny, dear, you know I’m not really angry at you, don’t you?”

Tenny nodded. “Yes, sir. I know. Those were pretty good spanks if you want me to course-correct for a minor mistake.”

“What percentage was I up to?”

“Based on the metrics, that was approximately 13.24%.”

“But I hit you as hard as I possibly could!”

“Severity is calculated according to multiple factors. These include: total kinetic force of impact, angle of stroke, pace and velocity of a series of spanks, length of time elapsed since previous spanking session, length of time elapsed from the start of the current spanking session, length and frequency of pauses, utilization of foreign objects as implements, content and meaning of words spoken for any instructions or lecturing, volume of words measured in decibels, tone of voice used, and emphasis placed on certain words. At your request, I can provide a full report and analysis of technique…It’s okay, Dad. You can really spank me if you need to. I promise I won’t break.”

Father sighed as he patted Tenny’s bottom. “Junior, Gala? Did Tenny do anything that deserves a spanking today? I know it’s just supposed to be a calibration, but I feel bad spanking her for nothing.”

Junior shrugged. “I think she was pretty cool to have around. She didn’t do anything bad.”

Gala pouted. “She said I couldn’t have any cookies! Spank her more!”

Tenny bowed her head. “I’m sorry, Gala.”

Father stroked Tenny’s computer-terminal head. “Hold on, I’m not going to spank Tenny for that. She did exactly right not to let you eat cookies without asking, Gala.”

Tenny’s mouth curled into a wavy smile, her eyes watery. “Preference noted. Thank you, Dad.”

Father patted Tenny's head twice with one hand, then patted her bottom twice with his other hand. "But if I'm going to spank you in the future, I'll have to get the hang of it. I'm going to spank you a bit longer Tenny, and try my best to make it count. Please tell me if I'm getting too close to 90%."

Tenny wiggled her bottom slightly. "Yes, sir. I promise I will let you know if I'm in any danger of suffering permanent damage."

Father waved a finger, trying his best to imitate a stern authority figure. "And all of you watch closely. Remember, you're never too old for a spanking, if you *need* one."

Mother froze as she was about to drain the last dregs from her flask, then put it away looking shame-faced. "Ahm…yesh, dear…"

Father rested his hand on the small of Tenny's back. "Tenny, dear, it's time for your spanking. Are you ready?"

Tenny trembled, her gears moaning softly, before she lifted her bottom slightly. "Yes, Daddy. I'm ready for my spanking."

Father began to spank Tenny with stony determination, slamming the palm of his hand down with all the ferociousness he could muster. After a few steady minutes of spanking, his arm started to go numb. Father rubbed his shoulder, wincing. "Hah…how hard a spanking was that?"

"That was approximately 23.13% on the Heinlein Scale. If you were actually punishing me for something, I would definitely want to avoid repeating the same error any time soon…though making a more lasting impression on my memory banks would require a minimum of 30%."

Father gasped for air. "You mean to tell me that…oh, never mind. I think you've had enough punishment. Given that you haven't actually done anything wrong, why don't we end it here?"

Tenny nodded. "It's your decision, sir. Whatever you decide, I will obey."

"Then up you get, Tenny. Spanking is all over."

Tenny's screen displayed a pained expression, and she rubbed her bottom gently. When Father patted her on the shoulder, Tenny's eyes popped open, and she smiled sweetly. "Thank you, Daddy. Would you like me to email you a PDF report and analysis of the calibration spanking session?"

Mother brushed Tenny aside to dive across Father's lap, wriggling her bottom invitingly. "Enough of that! It's my turn. Tenny, go read to the children! Or put on some brainless cartoons! Whatever you want!"

Father cleared his throat. “All right, honey, tell me why you’re getting this spanking.”

Mother bounced up and down on Father’s lap. “Ooooh! I drink too much! And I’ve got a smart mouth! And I’ve been sneaking cookies! So now by butt’s getting too big, and you’ve gotta spank outback into shape! Now hurry up and spank your wife!”

“Oh, yeah? You think you give the orders around here? I’ll spank you all right, woman!” As Father landed the first firm clap across his wife’s caboose, Tenny backed away, slowly.

Father started to spank at a brisk pace. “Who wears the pants in this house?”

Mother moaned, but there wasn’t a hint of sorrow in her voice. “Ooooh! You do, sir! You’re in charge!”

“That’s right! So, as soon as I’m done spanking this chubby little bottom, I want to see you march your butt straight to the kitchen, and make me a sandwich!”

“Oh! Ah! Yes, sir! I’ll make you a sandwich! I wanna be in the kitchen, barefoot, with a bun in the oven!”

“I’ll give you some hot, toasty buns! Two of them! Let’s give them a few more minutes to cook!”

Mother howled with either pain or pleasure, before Tenny quickly ushered the children into the living room and slammed the door behind her. “Is it just me, or is our family a bit…weird?”

Junior and Gala glanced at one another, shrugged, and answered at once. “It’s just you.”

Tenny’s cooling fan fluttered as she sighed with relief. “Whoo! Thank goodness…now your Mother said I need to read you some books. I could generate a list of classic literature appropriate for younger audiences…”

Tenny flashed a dazzlingly bright, mischievous smile, in glorious RGB color. “...or we could watch some brainless cartoons!”

The End?